

NOT TESTIFYING



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF CONNECTICUT, INC.

1890 Dixwell Avenue, Suite 203  
Hamden, CT 06514-3183  
203-288-7996 Fax 203-288-7998 [www.lwvct.org](http://www.lwvct.org)

**CGA Government Administration and Elections Committee**

February 25, 2015, Public Hearing

**Opposition to:**

**SB 829 AAC PERSONS WHO ASSIST OTHERS IN REGISTERING AS ELECTORS**

Comments submitted by Yvonne D. Senturia, Election Laws Specialist

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The League of Women Voters of Connecticut is a nonpartisan, statewide organization committed to the active involvement of citizens in their government and improving the electoral process. The League supports a political process open to all citizens, with equal access to the right to vote, including outreach to potential voters, such as high school students and new citizens. The League ***strongly opposes*** SB 829.

**Senate Bill 829** would require that each person who assists others in registering to vote file a statement with the Secretary of the State. It does not grant any group status to nonprofit organizations such as the League, or community, school or other organizations that also support voter registration efforts. What personal, financial or other information might be required from persons who are required to file with the state is not disclosed; nor is there any indication what penalty would fall on a volunteer assisting in voter registration for failure to file with the Secretary of State.

Countless League volunteers currently go out into their communities to register voters and encourage civic participation. In schools we encourage high school seniors to register; at back-to-school nights we reach out to families new to our communities; we stand in front of grocery stores and at community events with voter registration forms; and we work with local registrars to assist new citizens in registering after completion of the Naturalization Ceremonies.

This bill effectively would exclude the League and other volunteer-based community groups from reaching out to potential voters. It contradicts the recent improvements in voter registration achieved in Connecticut through online registration, permanent absentee ballots for the disabled, and Election Day registration. With our disappointingly low voter turnout, particularly for municipal elections, this is no time to block voter outreach and civic engagement efforts in communities across the state.

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut urges you to reject this mistaken effort to inhibit volunteer civic efforts.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this bill.